

A Multidisciplinary Approach to Child Neglect

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What is Neglect?

- Failure to provide necessary care
 - Focus on caregiver
 - Punitive
- Failure to receive necessary care
 - Child's basic needs not met
 - Multiple people, entities, circumstances may be responsible

Ecological Model of Neglect

- Multifactorial etiology
- Characteristics and conditions of
 - Caregiver
 - Child
 - Family
 - Community
 - Culture/society
- Interaction of factors determines if neglect occurs

Belsky J, 1980

Types of Neglect

Physical

Emotional

Educational

Medical

Physical Neglect

- Inadequate hygiene
- Inadequate clothing
- Inadequate food
- Inadequate shelter
- Inadequate supervision
- Abandonment



Inadequate Food



- Not enough food
- Inappropriate food
- Contaminated food



Inadequate Shelter

- Filth
- Clutter



Inadequate Supervision (Supervisory Neglect)

- Did not watch child closely enough
- Inadequate substitute child care
- Failure to protect child from 3rd party
- Allowed, encouraged or forced child to engage in harmful activity
- Drove recklessly or while intoxicated.



Inadequate Substitute Child Care

- 69 yo grandmother with diabetes caring for two toddlers
- 9 yo caring for sibs (6, 3 and 2 years)
- 4 and 6 yo left with Mom's new BF's 'friend' for undefined period
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Emotional Neglect

- Chronic/extreme DV in presence of child
- Refusing/failing to provide psychological care
- Inadequate affection, nurturance
- Allowing child to use drugs/alcohol*



Educational Neglect

- Failure to enroll in school
- Poor school attendance (and/or inadequate home-schooling)
- Failure to meet special education needs

Medical (and Dental) Neglect

- Failure to attend appointments
- Noncompliance with treatment recommendations
- Lack of well-child care
- Lack of acute medical care
- Delay in seeking medical attention





Chemical Rash



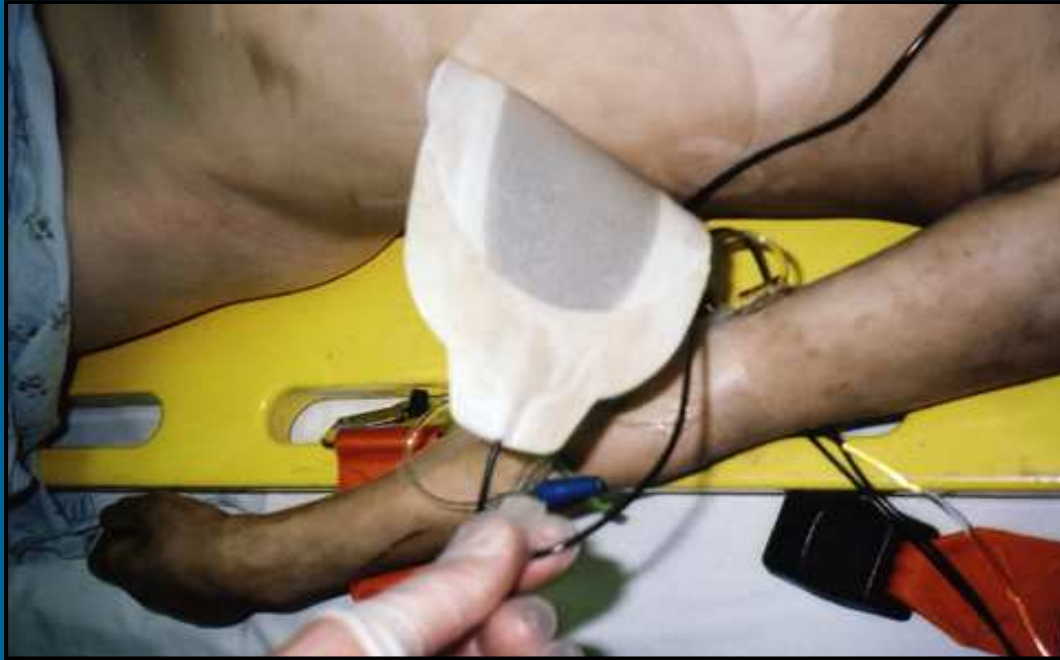
Malnutrition



Multiple Maltreatment

- Longitudinal study maltreated school-aged kids
- >1 type of maltreatment: 65%
- 3 or more types: 45%
- Supervisory neglect most common: 65%
- Failure to provide (49%) and physical abuse (48%)

Multiple Neglect



Professional Roles in Assessment of Neglect

Neglect Assessment

- How it is:
 - CPS
 - With an occasional:
 - Medical provider
 - Mental health provider
 - School personnel
- How it could be:
 - CPS
 - Law enforcement
 - Forensic interviewer
 - Medical provider
 - School personnel
 - Mental health provider

CPS Case Manager

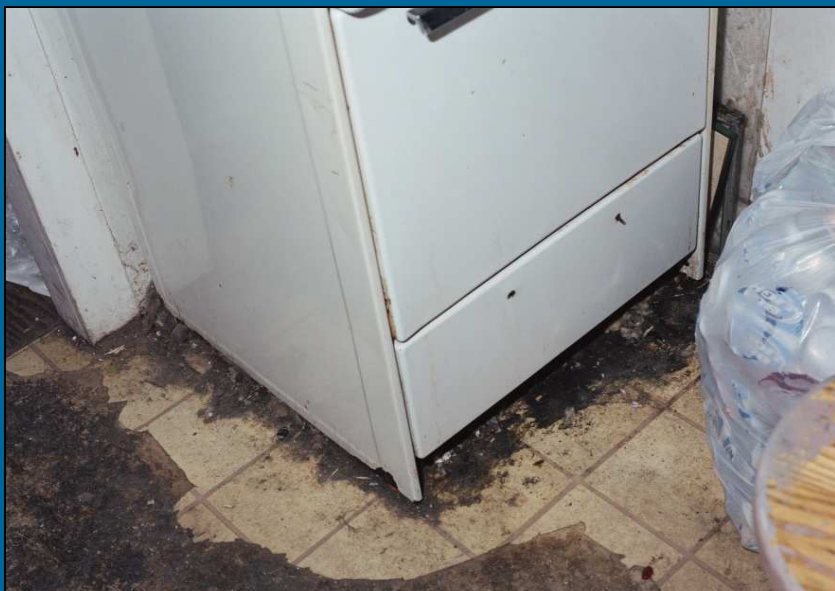
- Review all prior reports, investigations
- Safety assessment
 - Harm already experienced
 - Imminent danger
 - Risk of continuing harm
 - Co-existing abuse/multiple neglect
 - Family strengths/protective factors
- Determine underlying causes
- Develop plan of intervention

Law Enforcement

- Take photographs/videotape residence
- Photograph children
- Gather physical evidence
- Call building inspector as appropriate
- Write detailed report
- Interview witnesses
- Perform criminal background checks

Visual Documentation is Powerful

- Color photographs of each room
 - Panoramic and close-up
- Photographs of child's body, clothing
- Videotape of the home
- Photos won't capture:
 - Odors
 - Swarming insects
 - Ambient temperature



Investigative Tools

- Abundant detail in report
- Sketches may be helpful
- Use of protective equipment by investigators
- Call building inspector
- Interview children and include in report
- Interview neighbors

Investigative Tools

- View scene from perspective of child
- Look for what *isn't* there
- Examine the outside of home
- Consider the safety threats in immediate environment outside home
- Discuss your impressions with medical provider
- Consider possibility of co-existing abuse

Forensic Interview

- Not always available in community
- Can provide very detailed information not otherwise available
- Must be performed by trained interviewer
- Paint broad picture of child's living conditions (rather than focus on 1 critical event)
- Avoid questions that blame parents

Examples of Questions

- How does your house get clean? Tell me about everyone's chores.
- What do you usually have for breakfast?
- How do you get to school?
- Tell me about what you do when you get home from school.
- What happened the last time you were sick?

School Personnel

- Insight into child's life over long interval
- Manifestations of neglect noted in school
- Truancy issues
- Prior efforts at intervention

Mental Health Provider

- Psychological and developmental assessments of child
- Psych. assessment of caretaker
- Therapy

Medical Provider

- Evaluation of medical neglect
- Full physical exam and assessment
 - Evidence of physical neglect
 - Developmental delays
 - Growth and nutrition
 - Co-existing abuse
- Case reviews: Safety, risk and consequences of neglect (evaluate photos, records)

Wood paneled walls

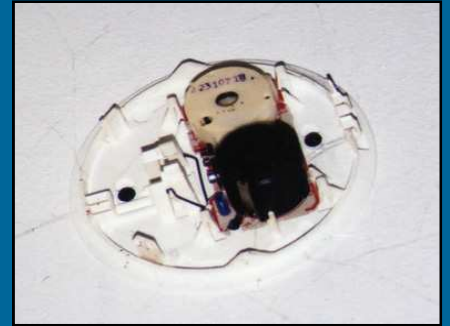
Blocked access to window

Smoking materials

Cluttered flammable materials



Risk Factors for Fire-Related Injury



- Modifiable
 - Fires started by:
 - Heating equipment
 - Smoking
 - Children
 - No smoke detector
 - Mobile home
 - Substandard home
 - No phone
 - Few exits
 - Alcohol use
- Nonmodifiable
 - Victim:
 - Young/old
 - Non-white race
 - Male gender
 - Disability
 - Rural/central urban area
 - Low income











Hazards in the environment

- Accessible drugs and toxic chemicals
 - Possible ingestion
 - Chemical burns



Caustic Ingestions

- Acid/Alkaline substances (pH<2 or >12 are strong)
- Very common; 10% result in severe injury
- Direct tissue damage via chemical rxn
- Burns to skin, mouth, esophagus, stomach, lungs
- Perforation, bleeding, scarring, cancer

Common household corrosives

- Acid

- Toilet cleaners
- Car battery liquid
- Drain cleaners
- Metal cleaning products



- Alkalis

- Drain cleaners
- Ammonia products
- Oven cleaners
- Dishwasher detergent
- Bleaches
- Hair relaxers
- Appliance disc battery

Karden E, 2004



Non-corrosive Toxic Ingestion

- Discuss adverse effects, signs/sx's of overdose
- CNS, liver, renal, cardiac involvement common
- Can be more specific if know the chemicals or medication
- PDR, Poison Control, Toxicology texts



Who cares about dirt?

- Infection is the major risk
 - Spoiled food
 - Feces
 - Rodents/insects
 - Molds, dust



Food-borne Infections

- 1 in 4 Americans get food-borne illness each year
- Typical perpetrators
 - Viruses
 - Salmonella
 - Campylobacter
 - Shigella



Signs and symptoms of food-borne diarrheal disease

- Fever and chills
- Diarrhea (with or without blood)
- Abdominal cramps
- Vomiting
- Some have long-term adverse effects

Animal Feces



Animal Life

- Rodents
- Fleas, cockroaches, etc



(Some) Diseases Transmitted by Animals

- Cat-scratch disease
- Campylobacter (dogs, cats, hamsters)
- Rat-bite fever (rodents, esp rats)
- Tapeworms and other worms (various animals)
- Toxoplasmosis

How likely is it a child will actually get these infections?

- Incidence may be low for individual infections, but cumulative risk much higher
- Repeated and chronic exposure increases risk
- Multiple co-existing risk factors increase overall risk of infection

Other Safety Hazards

- Small items in clutter: potential aspiration



- Scalding water temperatures
- Standing water



- Falling in dark
(lack of electricity)



Consider the children involved

- Age
- Developmental ability
- ADHD
- Cognitive or physical handicaps
- Medical condition (ex, asthma)

Toddler or Child With Seizures



What Can A Multidisciplinary
Approach Do For You?

Help answer critical questions

- What are the risks/harm to the children?
 - Medical input
 - Forensic interviews of kids
 - Mental Health input
- Effect of poverty
 - LE/DFCS input
 - What is source of income?
 - How does family spend income?
 - How do child's belongings compare with caregiver's?
- What is caregiver's attitude toward help and change?
 - LE, DFCS, FI, MH input

- Are present conditions the exception or the norm?
 - DFCS, LE, Med, FI
 - How long would it take for home to get this dirty?
 - Can witnesses provide information on past behavior?
 - Dated material in garbage, clutter
- What could caretaker have done to avoid neglectful conditions? (Who is to blame?)
 - DFCS, LE, Med, FI, MH
 - Interview landlord, neighbors
 - Consider cognitive and emotional condition of caregiver



In Conclusion:

- Neglect is chronic, and often fails intervention
- More information means better decisions
- The MDT can help the family more than any single entity
- Investigation is labor-intensive but critical and requires multidisciplinary team